

investment in medical research, in education, in health care facilities, in transportation, we have declined economically as a nation. The middle class is under fire. We are not able to build and produce the way we could have if we had kept this infrastructure up to date.

That is the importance of the FAST Act. It is the importance of much of the rest of the jobs bills we have pushed in this Congress. We know that every \$1 billion in school renovation can create 10,000 jobs.

The FAST Act includes strong "Buy American" provisions to ensure that Ohio construction workers, for instance—we are the third leading manufacturing State in the country, exceeded only by Texas, twice the size of California—three times the size—building technicians, boiler repairmen, roofers, painters, electricians, and people who manufacture these products are using American-made products.

The FAST Act is included in President Obama's American Jobs Act. Under his proposal, Ohio would receive some \$985 million in funding for K-12 schools and an additional \$148 million for Ohio's community colleges. Ohio has one of the best community college networks in the country.

It is obvious our schools need fixing. Our workers need work. Interest rates are low. Construction companies want to put people to work and, competing with each other, will bid as low as they likely will in the next decade or two, so now is the time to do this.

This bill has been endorsed by some 50 organizations: the American Association of School Administrators, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the Building & Construction Trades, First Focus Campaign for Children, and the Parent Teacher Association, the PTA. They agree it is about jobs, about education, and our Nation's future. I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation.

Lastly, I wish to read a couple letters I received about this legislation. First is Jeannine from Strongsville, OH. She is a teacher:

I have taught at the same middle school for 24 years. During that time, I have watched our building physically deteriorate before my eyes.

Strongsville is what we would call, by most measurements, one of Cleveland's more affluent suburbs. Nonetheless, she has seen it physically deteriorate in 24 years of teaching.

The leaky roof leaves stains on the ceilings and the floors. Often the heating doesn't work.

Two years ago, my classroom had no heat in December. We are a suburb of Cleveland, so do I need to tell you how cold it was in there?

After more than two decades with no money for paint, our vice principal asked Home Depot for help—it donated enough paint to spruce up the hallways, offices, and a handful of classrooms.

She writes:

Does it sound like I teach in the inner-city or an extreme rural area in Ohio?

She doesn't. She teaches in what we would call an affluent suburb of Cleveland.

I teach in a suburban community where many of the houses sell for around \$300,000 or more. But the community has not passed a levy in a while.

I pay 20% toward my health insurance . . .

My colleagues may remember that Governor Kasich had just pushed through a bill to take away collective bargaining rights for people such as Jeannine, saying they should be paying more of their health care. They have already made those concessions at the bargaining table. That is why Jeannine says she pays 20 percent toward her health insurance. She says:

10% toward my retirement, and [I] have not seen a pay increase in years.

I really love what I do, but am despondent at times about the lack of community support for education.

That is a whole other issue. But we do know we can make a difference in making not just Jeannine's life better—that is a goal we should share—but, most importantly, making teacher morale, student morale, teacher effectiveness, and student learning significantly better.

The last letter I will share is from Erin from Columbus, OH. She is a special ed teacher. She writes:

Of our 14 schools, 5 are currently undergoing the last of a 2 year renovation project.

We had schools where walls were literally falling in, we were in urgent need of these repairs.

Now, we find ourselves lacking in technology, and are in need of updating these needs, in order to compete with the ever changing needs of the demands of the workplace that our students will be entering.

Investments in education such as targeted resources for school and campus repair and modernization will jump start the economy and ensure students the learning environments so essential to their success.

Our student day is now shorter, all in an effort to save money.

Think about this: They are making the schoolday shorter when we are talking, in the paragraph before in her letter, about: How do we compete internationally? We are going to make our schoolday shorter when already we go to school—I think the former Denver school superintendent, the Presiding Officer, would confirm this—fewer days than many of our economic competitors. So because of costs, because we need to continue to give tax breaks to the wealthiest people in this country, we cannot fund the kinds of things we want to fund in education to compete internationally.

In the end, Erin writes:

It's the students that lose, and our educators know this, and [we all] strive each and every day to reach every single student, with the ever increasing demands put upon them.

She writes:

The FAST Act will make sure that our students have the learning environments they need and deserve.

My words may have, I hope, convinced some of my colleagues. I hope the words, the two letters from Jean-

nine and Erin—Jeannine from a Cleveland suburb; Erin, a central Ohio teacher, both with long experience in the classroom—I hope their words were compelling enough so my colleagues will join me in supporting the FAST Act, getting it through the Senate—not filibustering it. Let's debate it, talk about it, vote on it up or down, and send it to the House. I hope we get it to the President by the end of the year so we can start putting people back to work doing the school renovation, putting our factory workers back to work making the windows and cement and brick and all we need in school construction and school renovation and making a difference for our students in the decades ahead.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PASSAGE OF S. RES. 199

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to express my appreciation for the passage of S. Res. 199 by unanimous consent last night. This resolution supports the goals and ideals of Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week.

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, known collectively as inflammatory bowel disease, are chronic disorders of the gastrointestinal tract which afflict approximately 1.4 million Americans, 30 percent of whom are diagnosed in their childhood years. IBD can cause severe abdominal pain, fever, and intestinal bleeding. Complications related to IBD can include: arthritis, osteoporosis, anemia, liver disease, growth and developmental challenges, and colorectal cancer. Inflammatory bowel disease is being diagnosed with increased frequency in children and can be especially devastating for these young patients and their families.

Despite the prevalence of IBD, a lack of awareness among both the general public and health professionals may contribute to the misdiagnosis and mismanagement of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. S. Res. 199 will support efforts to increase awareness and education about these illnesses. It will also recognize the individuals and families who must contend with IBD as part of their daily lives, as well as the health care professionals who care for